

BirthdayDrabbles

by boyfuzz

Category: Hamatora/ãf•ãfžãf^ãf©

Genre: Humor, Parody

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2014-08-22 08:59:42

Updated: 2014-09-13 20:12:12

Packaged: 2016-04-27 05:15:19

Rating: T

Chapters: 5

Words: 12,606

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Birthday does things. ooc/au depending on the chap? i'm not sure, I think it's funny. !Starring Birthday!

1. A Wedding

"Write a fanfic about Birthday attending a wedding with Ciel there (guest starring Nice-kun)

>It's either that or art x moral"
-prompter**

* * *

><p>I wasn't really looking at what was in front of me as I walked down the tree-lined path, especially what with Nice-kun at my side and all. We were on official business, so I had a lot on my mind to begin with, but going on a mission without my usual partner seemed less manageable than usual today.<p>

"So who's wedding is this again?" I glance at Nice-kun, who begins to scratch at the bandage across the bridge of his nose.

"Those guys." He gestures ahead and I see we've entered a grassy clearing housing the tent where the wedding is about to take place. I follow his gaze and see a large poster with a picture of the happy couple and "Congratulations Mr. and Mrs. Dullahan!" printed across it.

"Oh," I grin, "isn't that sweet."

To be honest, we have a pretty lame job today. It was the husband that came to us, saying he knew his wife was cheating on him with a guy name Davis and that he didn't know who he was but that goddamn Davis was coming to their wedding and it's his first or only chance to find out who the guy is so would we please attend and find Davis while he's busy getting married to his cheating wife. I had thought it strange that he wanted to even go through with the thing when he knew the lady had been cheating on him, but Nice-kun jumped on the

job. I figured it had something to do with his wanting to know what kind of lady would invite her secret significant other to her goddamn wedding, and I was sure as hell curious about that too. As it so happened, Ratio ended up having to show up at his real job on the day of the wedding, so Nice-kun and I teamed up together, which I don't really like for some reason. I mean I like Nice-kun as much as the next guy (?) but to be honest he kind of rubs me the wrong way in close proximity. He's the kind of guy I want to sit across from at a restaurant, not next to, if you know what I mean.

He interrupts my thoughts then, "They look happy."

Nice-kun's observation bothers me. "Well one of them is. Maybe they both are."

Nice-kun looks at me comically.

"Davis, Davis, Davis," I chide as I turn on my heel and head towards the tent-

And in doing so run head on into-Ratio? No. The "whoa" I hear doesn't sound quite right.

"Shit, sorry!" I jump back and extend my arms forward to steady him by the shoulders. It's not Ratio, I confirm by his face.

A voice that isn't quite forceful enough instructs me to "watch it," and the guy rudely shrugs my hands off, then proceeding to dust-yes, dust with his hands-his shoulders. He flashes his eyes at me and whisks away.

Finally allowed time to register the encounter, I look at Nice-kun who is beginning to laugh hysterically at my misfortune, and I cuff him in the arm. "You fucking douche bag"

We take our seats at a white-clothed table and finger the silver cutlery, looking towards the table where Davis is supposed to sit. It's empty, but we're early, so we sit there for another goddamn half hour until everyone at the table is seated.

"He's seat number 4 right?"

"No, number 6 I thought."

"You're fucking kidding me it's 4, right there."

"No that's seat number 6. 4 would be there"

"I thought that was 2 and that was 6 and he's in 4 there."

Nice-kun and I bicker like this until he decides to check the name cards on the table. I wait in my seat as he fakes a 3 minute trip to the bathroom in order to sneak a glimpse of the name on the card, but when he gets back he assures me he's in seat 6, right there.

"That's him?" The guy isn't anything special.

"Yeah." Nice-kun's no fucking prize either.

"Let's catch him during the after party and interrogate him then,

yeah?" I lose interest as I see waiters bringing out trays of those little fucking snacks with the French name or whatever.

"I haven't eaten all day actually," I mention, speaking a bit too loudly. "Hey waiter get me some of that, please!" I fill my plate from the oncoming waiter's tray and turn grinning to Nice-kun, who snatches a fried mushroom from my plate and pops it into his mouth.

Talking while chewing, the bastard, he muses "I wonder how many people are here."

"Well, the Dullahans are loaded right? It looks like there are probably people who they don't even know here." I survey the crowd. Everyone is dressed real fancy and I'm glad I decided not to wear my usual street clothes. Nice-kun on the other hand stands out as usual, mostly on account of the huge headphones resting around his neck. I blink as he scratches the bandage on his left cheek. He's always bothering me when he does shit like that.

"Hey what's going on over there?" He interrupts my thoughts again, something he's really good at doing, to point out what looks like...

"Art?" Sitting at a nearby table, what looks like detective Art and someone else. "Who's that guy with him?"

Nice-kun narrows his eyes and we both watch silently. Art is sitting with an older guy who looks pretty sketchy with long white hair and shifty eyes and all. But what's weird is that he's leaning over Art real close, his hand on his face and at one point they lean into each other and it looks like-

"Did they just kiss?" Nice-kun points out what I didn't want to talk about out loud.

"Ha umm who? I don't know?" I stammer, averting my gaze and deciding to pretend I did not in fact see anything.

Nice-kun just clicks his tongue for some reason. Dismissal? Aggravation? I can never tell with him.

Soon afterwards, everyone assembles in benches to watch the wedding ceremony, which was boring as hell, mind you. Nice-kun and I end up sitting right behind the Ratio look-alike, which is annoying because I have to keep staring at the back of his head throughout the goddamn ceremony, with the eyepatch strap and all. I'm more than thankful when Mr. Dullahan kisses the cheating bride. I watch Davis applaud. Sometimes my work makes me bear witness to some shit I just wish I didn't have to.

Anyway after the ceremony Nice-kun and I set our sights on Davis. We chat him up, get him some drinks, and get comfy with him.

"How do you know the bride and groom?"

"Well I'm a family friend of Mrs. Dullahan." The guy has a habit of talking out of one side of his mouth and it keeps fucking me up because I'm on his other side and it looks like he isn't even talking.

"That's nice. I suppose you know each other well, since you're at her wedding."

"Oh I don't know." He really isn't a good liar either.

After some sub par conversation we hit the road, or to be more specific, the dro. We go out from under the tent approaching the line of trees surrounding the place where there are some of those nasty ass puerto potties. We squeeze into one and light up a half joint to share. We then take turns actually pissing to cover up the smell or something. It's a pretty weird ritual but sometimes when we're on jobs together Nice-kun and I like to get a little hella. Anyway, then we have the munchies so we head back to the par-tay. There's all kinds of delicious shit there since the couple had hired some super fancy catering company to do it. Nice-kun and I just park ourselves there for the remainder of the party stuffing our faces and watching the guests get shit-faced.

I notice Art and Ghost-san at the drink table. They both look pretty hazy and I'm wondering if they're about to head out somewhere but instead the tall guy just leans down, cupping what looks like Art's butt with one hand while caressing his neck with the other. It all happens so quickly, as Art's arms latch around Ghost-san's neck and I realize they're making out there at the drink table. Nice-kun excuses himself to the bathroom. I watch the two as they devour each other and wonder if it's all reality.

We're there til late, which we hadn't anticipated, but I know I lose track of time and I think Nice-kun got lost in the forest somewhere because after we saw weird shit go down I didn't see him again til we were about to leave. Late. It was like 3 am when we rolled out of there. I was a bit out of it and rambling on about things like, "I didn't know Art had a boyfriend. I wonder if they'll get married like the Dullahans. Maybe one of them will cheat too. What was up with that? Did Nice-kun know what that was about? Maybe you should call him" I figured Nice-kun just wasn't listening to me so I was messing around a bit with him just to see if he was listening. "Anyway I thought if Art was gonna date anyone he'd go for you Nice-kun. Aren't you guys close like that? Who was that Ghost-san anyway?"

The next day I woke up in my bed and memories began rushing back to me. I'd been drinking at the wedding and then I remembered the Ratio look-alike guy had had to take me home and I'd kept calling him Nice-kun and was talking about Art and then I realized how I don't really look at people when they're next to me and I thought about it all.

* * *

><p>and i thought about it all...

2. Mini-Golf

**"Possibly... mini golf."
>-prompter

* * *

><p>I was sitting at the bar in Cafe Nowhere, stirring my iced coca-cola with my bendy straw, when Murasaki the Megane burst in, apparently with big news. At least he made it seem that way because he made a big point to gather everyone in Hamatora (except Nice-kun, who was out on official business with Inspector Art) before he could start, but when he began his big spiel with, "So as we all know, Nice's birthday is coming up," I became bored already.<p>

Last year's birthday celebration for Nice-kun had been a big surprise party that, while it had began in good fun, ended with an obnoxiously inebriated Nice-kun and not enough snacks. To be frank, it was fun until Nice-kun went on a rampage and tried to "out-eat and out-drink everyone combined!" those being his exact words at the time. This year, I couldn't imagine anyone coming up with much better of an idea, so I felt a bit pessimistic. Regardless, Murasaki continued.

"Right now Nice is out being distracted by Art, who is in on our plan and facilitating this discussion." So that was what that was all about. "Anyway, I know last year's celebration turned out to be a bit too much." Well that was an understatement but I could get on board with it anyway. "So this year I was thinking we should tone it down and try something a little different." He waited to see everyone nod their approval before going on. "I thought if we went out to do something, that would be an easy way to monitor ourselves by default." I saw what he was getting at. You can't get blackout drunk in public. "The only thing is, what activity can we all enjoy together in celebration of Nice's birthday?" Indeed. "So I did some groundwork and found out a couple things Nice likes to do on his days off." Everyone gathered seemed to listen closer when he said that. What was it? What's Nice-kun like? "So here's what I found out." The suspense was killing me- "Mini golf." His conclusion felt only slightly anticlimactic. He went on to explain this "great" place nearby that we could all go play mini golf at. It didn't sound like such a terrible idea, and if Nice-kun was into that, none of us could complain. It was settled.

When the day came around, we all collected Nice-kun and ferried him to the mini-golf site in high spirits. I'd never done anything like it before, to be honest, so I got excited about the little details like picking your ball color. Because it was his birthday, Nice-kun got first pick: the pink ball. Because my name was Birthday, I decided to choose second: the red ball. We even got a discount because we came with a big group. We were all talking amongst each other and having a good time as we moved to the first putt. It was easy, you just hit the ball in a straight line and... it went in. Only Ratio, who hit the ball too hard the first few times, seemed to have trouble with it. It wasn't until we got to the third putt that I realized this wasn't going to be all fun and games. Nice-kun fucked it up first. He actually got his ball stuck in one of those traps they put just to screw you over, and he had to get an employee to get it out. Everyone laughed at him. I'll admit without shame that I laughed hardest. Anyway, he was kind of cross after that and since he was the birthday boy, I took it upon myself to cheer him up. While everyone in our group was taking their turns at the next hole, I stole over to Nice-kun's side. He was standing very close to Art-kun, so I ended up talking to the two of them at the same time.

"Hey, Nice-kun," I breathed towards him, just barely catching their attention, but when he made eye contact I was able to communicate to

him sufficiently what I meant. "You feeling ok?"

Exchanging glances with Art, Nice leaned over to include Hajime, "Hey, Birthday and Art and I all have to piss real bad, so we're just gonna run to the little boy's room real quick. What about you?" He ventured to wink at her, and she picked up the vibe quick enough. She briefly informed Koneko about our planned absence, and then the four of us scurried away, ducking behind fancy rock formations as we went and hiding ourselves behind the streams of too-blue running water and fake plants. We quickly found a little spot on the rocks hidden behind some stuff where we could do whatever without being seen.

"Happy birthday, Nice-kun, now we're going to celebrate properly." As I spoke I lifted my sunglasses from my face and placed them on that of Nice-kun, the birthday boy. Now it was his time to shine. I had assumed the responsibility of bringing the weed, so I pulled out my drug pouch with pride and procured from it the joint I had rolled earlier with this moment in mind.

Nice took the first hit of course, and as I watched the creamy cloud of smoke emerge from his parted lips I realized how good it felt to be there. He passed it off to Art next, so we continued clockwise, with me and then Hajime, who took the longest hit of all of us. Art seemed particularly shocked by the size of the cloud of smoke she released, but the falling water around us helped it all evaporate into the air without much of a trace. I was impressed, vaguely recognizing that this spot was way more favorable for smoking weed than some porto-potty, but decided not to dwell on that. The place smelled strongly of chlorine and as we got more high we all started noticing it more. We were all just commenting to each other how surreal and even a bit garish the décor seemed, what with the ultra-bright blue and green, when I figured we should make our way back to the group. I had rolled multiple joints just in case, but we all seemed to feel so good after the first one that I decided I should save the others for later. It was better this way. We clambered out of our little alcove and Art sprayed some cologne over us to disperse the air of ganja. I noticed that he was definitely the kind of guy who would cover that detail. We all murmured our appreciation and started back.

I'm not exactly proud to admit that we got lost and had to have an employee direct us back through the course until we found our group again, but when we got back for good, we were well-received and continued making our putts with ease. I thought I must be better at it because I'm high, but Art seemed to become way less accurate, so it must depend on the person. Art is a cute guy. When he gets high, he wears his heart on his sleeve, and that's always fun. I watched Nice tease Art as he missed the hole for a seventh time, and grinned at the color it brought to his cheeks. Everyone was just standing around and talking as Nice tried to help Art get the damn ball in the hole. He even did the cliché wrap-your-arms-around-the-person thing to help him swing the damn club. It was a real scream, but I noticed I was the only one paying such close attention, so I downplayed my reactions like I always have to do when I'm having a good time. When the thing finally happened, we all moved on, groaning about Inspector Art slowing us down, which seemed to please Nice-kun. Well good. It was his birthday.

It wasn't long before we got to the final hole, perhaps one of the

most intense things I think I've borne witness to in my short life. The course was all curvy and you had to bounce the ball off of things at certain angles to continue correctly. I took one look at it and figured I was fucked, but Koneko made a valiant effort that put all of us shaking in our boots to shame. We were all inspired, and fought on... in vain, for the most part. Nice-kun and Hajime were tied for least number of putts (5 each) when Art-kun, last to take his turn, stepped up. We were all watching and waiting for him to fuck up as he visibly braced himself and took the first swing. And that was the only swing necessary. I shit you not, like in a fucking movie, the ball went perfectly around every bend and bounce and literally made its way unaided through the course until it rolled neatly into the hole with an unquiet thunk. I think I'm justified in saying we all pissed ourselves in shock. I guess I was mad as hell, but it was too uncanny to take seriously. Weird shit happens when I'm high, I swear.

So after that, while everyone else went to eat at the food court area provided by the establishment, Nice-kun Art-kun Hajime and I, aka the Fantastic Four, sneaked off again for another hit. The second joint went quickly, and we all wanted to return soon anyway to eat with everyone else. Our group took up about three tables, which was cool. We looked like a force to be reckoned with. I was sitting across from Nice-kun eating a hot dog when I remembered I wanted to ask him something.

"So Nice-kun, you mini-golf a lot in your free time?" He was still wearing my sunglasses from earlier and I instinctively moved my hand up to my face to adjust them. Shit. I'm a creature of habit.

"What would make you think that?" Nice-kun responded to my question in a way I hadn't expected him to.

"So you don't?" I tried to stop myself from frowning a bit.

"Well, now that you mention it, I don't think I've ever been mini-golfing before." He looked at me frankly and I felt rage entering my nostrils and seeping down into my throat like mucus. I turned to stare daggers at Murasaki. What fucking groundwork did he do? I thought he said he'd found something Nice-kun liked to do, not something Nice-kun had never done before? Anyway, I realized Murasaki was a douche bag, and I was never going to trust him again for birthday plans. I guess we were all just lucky it had been a success...

"Nevermind, then," I faked another smile to Nice and played it off like my question had meant nothing. He was too busy engaging with Art the whole time for me to keep his focus for too long anyway. They seemed to be really into each other, I thought. I gazed off in another direction so they could carry on unobserved and made eye contact with Ratio from across two tables.

'Hey,' I mouthed and winked at him. He made some kind of expression that seemed somewhat smug, somewhat warm, and somewhat dismissive at the same time. I didn't really understand him all the time but I figured I could jive with him regardless. He was my partner, after all. I stood to move over and sit next to him, inserting myself between him and Honey and slinging my arm around his neck. I kind of mentioned to him how high I was and how cool the golfing had been. He only agreed that golfing was a good experience, and I wondered if he

wanted to get high too. I asked him if he wanted to get high too. He gave an evasive answer so I took him to the bathroom to smoke him up, poor guy. I felt a little bad because he's my friend and I should have his back, but it wasn't so bad. We squeezed into a stall together and got busy. There were fans in the place, too, so we didn't even leave it that smoky.

Upon returning, I hit Art up for his cologne which Ratio and I applied generously, and after that almost everyone was ready to go. We stopped at McDunnell's on the way back to Cafe Nowhere and feasted like sad broke people. The whole thing then turned into a weird coed slumber party when we all curled up on the hardwood floors with blankets and pillows and just got ready to sleep. I don't remember who started it, but it became a thing. Somehow booze got involved too, probably Gasquet's doing, and before I knew it I was flying high. I recall leaning against Ratio's chest as I lead a group toast to Nice-kun's day of birth. Then we all fell into the expected singing of "Happy Birthday to You" and Nice-kun turned off all the lights in place of blowing out candles because "I need a birthday wish even if I don't have candles to blow out!"

I fell asleep at some point and had dreams of getting high in various places and golfing in crazy settings. I recall the scent of Art's cologne clearly.

* * *

><p>I liked writing this
*</p>

3. The Mission

*****Every shitty, overdone cliché you can think of***

-prompter

well we brainstormed and I ended up just doing this...

* * *

><p>I had an anime dream last night. I was transported to another world. When I woke up I felt the magic slipping through my fingers...<p>

Thud! My sheets slide through my fingers as I plummet to the floor.

Falling out of bed first thing in the morning isn't exactly my cup of tea, but sometimes you have to embrace new experiences. I look at the alarm clock and begin dressing quickly right away. I'm late.

I run out the door breathlessly, a piece of hastily-prepared toast clenched between my teeth... and I slow down, stop. What was I late for again? I touch my head absently and wonder what I was thinking. Anyway, now that I'm awake I head over to Cafe Nowhere to find most of my friends there already, their faces somehow looking spritely and glowing. Which is strange. I'm immediately a bit unsettled, so I go over and sit next to Ratio for support, taking a bite of my toast.

"Hey, Ray, how are things?" I nudge him with my elbow a bit, mostly to warm myself up.

"Mm," He grunts, and I can tell he isn't in a good mood today. Oh well, it was worth a try. Soon enough something else arrests my attention completely.

I look over at Nice-kun, who is sitting at the client table with, none other than, Inspector Art (the bae). Something is off, though, I notice when I see Art's face. He's flushed for some reason and looks more upset than usual. I overhear him say something along the lines of, "I-it's not like I w-wanted to come here. G-Gasquet-san said to... so that's why..." I'm not sure what's going on or what happened to Art but it's definitely not something I want to concern myself with right now. That's what I tell myself, anyway. But I'm still listening in on their conversation when Nice-kun starts speaking, trying to calm Art down somehow and agreeing to help as needed. I guess I wouldn't be able to resist him either, but I would probably try to seem less servile. I'm grinning a bit at the unusual display when, as if in slow motion, Nice-kun turns his head to face me, our eyes lock, he points at me and beckons me over. Shit, now I've done it. Nice-kun wants me. I gulp and drag myself the distance to stand in front of a blushing Inspector Art-kun and a ruffled Nice-kun.

"What cn I do ya for?" I ask like a goddamn idiot. I'm a little captivated by Art's demeanor. He's never looked quite so... shoujo? I'm unsure.

Nice-kun answers. "Art needs us to check something out with him, so-"

"It's not like that!" Art protests. "Gasquet-san-"

"Yes, Gasquet requested that we accompany Art on a mission. Are you down?" Nice-kun looks like a hollow shell of a man.

"Why not take Murasaki?" I look around the place. Where is he?

"Murasaki's on vacation." Nice-kun responds too quickly, and I cringe as images of Murasaki wearing a Hawaiian shirt with khakis and binoculars and flip-flops invade my mind. I don't know where this is coming from, but I am beaten into submission. Does Hamatora go on vacation?

"Fine then, where are we going?" I try for a fake smile but it feels more forced than usual and I stop short.

"First, we have to pick up some things up right?" Nice-kun confirms this with Art, who doesn't return his gaze but instead nods, his eyes fixed on the floor. Nice-kun resumes, "Yeah, at the konbini." He gives me a Nice-kun Brand smile and claps the two of us on our shoulders. We all leave together, and I glance over my shoulder before we're about to disappear from my safe place forever (or not) to see Ratio staring back at me, the bastard. Goodbye to you too.

I didn't give it much thought when Nice said we needed to stop at the konbini but now we're in line and Nice is holding two armfuls of

Arizona iced tea and I'm seriously confused. This was a mission, right? I consider clarifying our business here but Nice is leaning close to a red-faced Art and murmuring something and I don't much want to get into it with them. Besides, I'm too busy eavesdropping on the conversation between the cashier and the guy in front of us to really bother. The beige cargo shorts are innocuous enough for me, but the rest of him... The guy's wearing a brightly-colored t-shirt that looks like... an American flag? Why? His bandana is in the same style of his shirt and he has on sunglasses in the store and he's yelling at poor Konbini-kun over something unimportant like not having the right kind of cigarettes or whatever. A sigh escapes me and I plug up my one ear with my pinky, under the guise of cleaning it maybe, when I hear this guy say some shit like, "Isn't this America? Where are my goddamn lites?!" I don't mean to, but it just comes out...

"Buddy, doesn't that smart phone you're waving around have gps? This is Japan." That was me, casting aside my filter like a dirty pair of socks. Konbini-kun stares at me. Naturally, Murica-san turns on me in such an aggressive manner I silently bid my life adios because he looks about ready to snap my sorry neck in half. He could do it, too, so I try to make up for my transgression with a brief amendment that I hope sounds smoother than it feels, "If you're lites are so important to you there's another convenience store down the block." I gesture with my thumb towards the door, for emphasis. I'm not sure what stops him from teaching me a lesson, but he just stands there with his chest heaving for a solid moment, then seizes his bag of whatever and shoulders his way out of the damn place like some child. Maybe my stringy frame intimidated him? I'm glad to walk away alive anyway. Heh...

My party shuffles to the counter and Nice unloads. I make somewhat awkward eye contact with Konbini-kun, sorry I mean "PIERCE" like his nametag says, and I need to disperse the American's leftover presence so I say, "Not hard to spot the tourists around here, huh?" I make him sort of smile and release a puff of air that comes off as a laugh, so my existence is justified for now. Meanwhile, he's ringing up all these fucking Arizona iced teas and I remember that I have no idea what's going on. The total is upwards of 3500 yen.

We leave the ungodly place in silence, and I breathe in fresh air with relief, at which point I decide to go for it. "This was a mission, right? What's with the Arizona arsenal?"

Nice's reply: "You'll see." Did I mention how much this guy pisses me off?

We're walking a way I don't usually go. It must be just about time for school to start because there are crowds of school girls wearing those cute uniforms like they do in anime, and the cherry blossoms are in full bloom, I realize. All of the sudden a harsh gust of wind sends pink petals showering over the whole scene and I watch as the girls' skirts blow up in the wind, revealing an array of panties and I avert my eyes because this is not meant for me. I'm not a pervert, I swear. I happen to have looked up into a tree and I catch a glimpse of something so I focus my eyes and it's a... cat? A cat in a tree? What's next? I mention it to Nice-kun, who promptly tells me we "have to do something about it". So then I go over to the tree and try to figure out how I'm supposed to climb this thing... I somehow get myself up to the first branch after having Nice-kun give me a boost,

and I maneuver over to the poor little guy and scoop 'im up into my arms. He's not exactly grateful, and I have about five scratches of varying depths by the time I land on the ground, back from my heroic deed of the day. I release him and he runs past me like a bat out of hell. You're welcome.

"Hey, that was a black cat that just ran by, does that mean you'll have bad luck?" Nice-kun points out the results of the mission _he_ sent me on, and I'm more than slightly pissed.

"Maybe, huh? I guess we'll see." I give him a look, but wonder if he picks up on it...

We approach the school entrance on our way and my eyes are caught by this one girl who's talking pretty loudly with two friends and they're walking but I notice something fall from her bag and I pause to look as we pass the place where she dropped it. A phone charm? I pick it up, see the girl about to enter the doors and run to catch up with her, arriving breathlessly with the charm extended in my hand.

"You... dropped this..." I'm breathing harder than I expected and she looks at me in this way and I wonder if I seem like some creeper but instead her eyes brighten and she smiles so enthusiastically I wonder if I've been transported to some alternate universe...

"My hero!" she exclaims, clasping my hands between hers.

I'm temporarily immobilized in her grasp but I quickly regain my wits and remove my hands, leaving the charm in her grasp. "S-sure thing!" I somehow excuse myself and escape to the sidewalk when I rejoin Art and Nice.

"You good?" Nice confirms the stability of my mental state and after I nod curtly we continue walking.

I have my hand behind my neck in what I figure looks like a normal gesture for me, and I'm tapping at the one arm of my sunglasses tilting them up and down when we get to the location of the police department. Nice and Art seem to know what they're doing so I just follow as they enter the building and board the elevator. Nice hits the button for the right floor. I wonder what...

"We're dropping these off at Gasquet's office," Nice-kun reveals finally.

Is that it? Is that the mission? I don't want to say anything else to Nice because I'm pissed at him, honestly. It's not like they needed me just to do this. Actually, Art could have done it by himself, so I'm pretty sure this isn't it... We are stopped in the elevator by about six different people who are going to a different floor than we are, and it slows down our travel time considerably. I consider that this may be an instance of bad luck but I push it from my mind because that's all bullshit right? Anyway, we make it to Gasquet-san's office and I trip over nothing upon entering the threshold. Nice-kun drops the bags of tea on his desk and Gasquet stands to thank us properly.

"I can't believe you actually did it!" he seems surprised to see us and I begin breathing a bit harder. "Thank you so much!" He removes a

can from a bag and opens it, taking an unabashedly long gulp and lets out a relatively high-pitched "aaaahhh!" after downing the entire thing.

When Nice-kun turns to me and Art and says, "Well, then, should we head back to Cafe Nowhere?" I just,

"Was that the mission?" He nods at me and I excuse myself to the bathroom.

In one of the metallic stalls, I stand and consider what just happened. I was duped somehow. Why? Was Nice-kun really this manipulative? At length, I exit the stall and rinse my hands just for the effect. I meet with Art and Nice again in the hall and we leave the building, taking the stairs at my request.

We eject into the big bad world and when the two begin walking in a direction that isn't Cafe Nowhere I speak up.

"Where to now?" I hope I don't sound as pissed as I feel.

Nice-kun answers, "I told Art I'd take him out to eat." He gestures towards his tsundere companion and cuts him off before he can protest that 'i-it's not like that' with, "Are you hungry?"

I reply that no, I'm not, so I respectfully decline to accompany them. I make my way slowly back to Cafe Nowhere. Upon my return I chastise Ratio for leaving me for dead and order some food from Koneko because I'm actually hungry. Today was shitty. I think I'll go home and go to sleep just to start over later in the day.

* * *

><p>these drabbles just come out like a leaky faucet or something. I hope they're as funny as I think they are...
x3

4. Another Birthday?

*****Sugar spice and everything Nice." - prompter**

I don't know what I'm doing half the time... these drabbles are only hypothetically in the same universe so you never really know what's going on or what's truth, you just go with it. I'm not above making things up and jumping around... (that's just a general disclaimer for this whole series of drabbles in case u didn't get it or anything I don't know :0)

* * *

><p>I wake up on the right side of the bed but remember falling asleep on the left. I vaguely think that I must have moved in my sleep because of the active dream I was having, but the impressions left floating about in my head begin to rapidly vaporize as I blink the sleep away. It's a good morning. Sunlight is just coming in through my window and I think I'll have some waffles for breakfast. I'm heading into the kitchen when I glance at the calendar and remember-September 23-it's Ratio's birthday today. Oh yeah, I gotta do something about that.<p>

After I notice this I get kind of wrapped up thinking about what I should do and forget my intentions to indulge in waffles, instead mindlessly grabbing for the Coconuggers. Cereal beats just about anything for breakfast anyway. About halfway through my jumbo-sized bowl I decide I'm going to make a cake. It's simple enough, but home-made things tend to have their way about them. Ratio would appreciate it at least. Probably.

The only issue is that of baking it, the cake that is. I'm not exactly good at those domestic-like things. I figure I'll just have a friend help. We all want to celebrate Ratio's birthday anyway, so I wrack my brain; who can help me complete this task? Murasaki, of course. He's always cooking and doing chores for Nice so he's gotta know a thing or two about making a cake! Regardless, finding a recipe online and following it should be easy enough...

I'm thinking about all this as I go back to my room to finish properly dressing myself and head out. When I get to Murasaki's place, I knock four times, then another five times when he doesn't answer fast enough. To my dismay, Nice-kun opens the door. I question him silently with my open mouth, but he doesn't offer any explanation as he demands,

"What do you want, Birthday?" His eyes are sharp and I wonder what's up.

"I'm here for Murasaki, 's he not in today?" I scuff the toes of my shoe against the doorstep.

"Is that Birthday?" comes Murasaki's voice, followed by the big guy himself stepping onto the premises. Nice-kun turns on him.

"I told you to stay in bed. You're sick! Walking around and acting like it's nothing will only keep you sick longer so just listen to me!" His voice is all aggravated and I can tell he's being a brat today.

While Nice-kun is scolding Murasaki I seize the opportunity to slip in and shut the door behind me. I follow Nice as he shoos Murasaki into his bedroom and manage to interject, "Hey, Murasaki, can you teach me how to make a cake? It's Ratio's birthday, remember, and I decided a cake would be best..."

"Murasaki can't help you do anything today, but I could totally fill in for him," Nice-kun speaks before Murasaki's opened mouth can utter a word (he always was good at talking fast), pointing to himself with his thumb and grinning at me like a total main character so I address my next remark to Murasaki again.

"Reeeeaallly? But I thought Nice-kun was bad at those kinds of things."

Nice, the stubborn ass that he is, replies again in Murasaki's stead, "Maybe I'm not such a hot-shot at housework and other dull crap like that, but a cake is something else. It's an artistic feat! In fact, I have the secret to making the perfect cake. So please, while Murasaki recuperates, allow me..." (he leads me out of the room), "to assist you."

Even I can't exactly resist following Nice when he gets all gung-ho about something. We shuffle into Murasaki's little kitchen and Nice-kun gets busy rummaging through the cabinets for what I assume are legit cake-making ingredients? I'm not convinced, so I lean against the stove and just, "So what's this secret recipe you're talking about? If I find out you're lying to me-"

"Well that's easy! What are the best cakes made of?" He holds me in his icy blue gaze; I blink once in response. "Sugar, spice and everything *nice*!" He winks at me.

Mortified, I pull out my sumafo. "I'm just gonna look up 'easy cake recipes' on google."

Nice-kun informs me that by "everything nice" he meant we should put w*d in the cake ("I got some with the intention of giving it to Ratio for his birthday, so if we use it for the cake it'll be like two gifts in one! Not to mention we all get to try the cake..."-Nice). I'm grateful for the clarification and agree to the idea. We proceed to sort of make a cake in relative silence. I'm tasting the batter for the nth time when we're just about done and I swear Nice-kun added too much vanilla extract.

"I told you it was a half-teaspoon; are you sure you didn't put a whole teaspoon or something else?" I criticize through the finger in my mouth. I really don't want to fuck this cake up.

"Why would I mess up something like that? I swear we followed all the instructions carefully..." We're both riding residual highs from baking with dope, and I wouldn't be surprised if it has affected our culinary performance. Nice-kun scratches at the bandage across his nose in consternation and I inwardly cringe when he tastes the batter with the same finger. "It's fine! Anyway, don't worry about it now. We have to put this thing in the oven!" His voice chaffs against my peace of mind.

We finish up and set the timer on the oven for half an hour... and now we wait.

"You wanna go see if Murasaki fell asleep?" I suggest, thinking maybe we could draw on his face or something.

Nice-kun yawns, "If he was still awake after all this time he'd have surely come out of his room by now."

Fucking Bandage-kun has an answer for everything. "All the better."

I go in, feeling Nice-kun's footfalls behind me (he doesn't exactly tread lightly). Sure enough, we find Murasaki snoozing away in his little bed, looking peaceful as hell, too, if I do say so myself. I turn to share a meaningful look with what's-his-name and we get down to business.

By the time we're finished with the guy he has whiskers and blush lines on his cheeks and some impressive eye details and a fancy third eye and cool lips... we got a bit carried away, actually, but Nice-kun kept saying how Murasaki was the "perfect model" for our "artistic exercise." I know, I shouldn't let Nice-kun talk me into things, but when he gets all spirited he defends his case so

convincingly it becomes almost impossible to go against him. More than that, though, I'm just surprised Murasaki slept through the whole thing. It's almost like that was reason enough to keep going... I guess he really must've been sick. Now I feel bad-

beeeep the timer *beeeep* on the stove *beeeep*

Nice-kun and I jump like naughty children caught stealing from the cookie jar and respectively trip over ourselves and each other to get to the kitchen and remove our baby from the oven. It's Nice who dons the oven mitts and does the thing. He's a mom at heart I think. Anyway, we decide the cake looks beautiful as hell and we get straight to finishing it up with the icing.

"Right, we should write or draw something on it..." Nice-kun mentions.

"Here, I'll do it." I seize the baggie of icing from his insistent hands and just sort of do something without thinking like I often do when I'm toasted like this... I end up drawing Ratio's face on it. "Is that ok?" I'm not...

"Oh, that's good! Haha, who knew you could draw?" An insult, nice. "Oh, here, " he snatches the stuff back, "this too." He draws a little speech bubble from Cake Ratio's mouth and writes _Happy birthday to me!_

"HAHA, oh my god!" It's not that funny but I'm about to bust a lung regardless.

We then go on to add little details like flowers and stars and hearts in the blank spaces until our canvas becomes almost too overwhelming to look at, which I find symbolic. It's a masterpiece. We look at it, look at each other, not sure what to do now.

"When did you want to give this to Ratio?"

Call me out like a chump, why don't ya? "Well... we should get a little party together. I'm sure everyone's free on Ratio's birthday, so..." I'm already furiously tapping at my phone, texting everyone to get their asses over here. "It's fine if we bring the party here, right? Well I already invited everyone, so..."

"Sure, then Murasaki can chill with us after he wakes up..."

So then we're preparing the place for guests and I'm tallying the incoming texts from people letting me know they're coming and soon enough it's time for them to start arriving so I text Ratio to come here instead of going home after work... I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed. Maybe the high is exacerbating it, but hey, I've never really tried to bake before, and I think the cake definitely had too much-

"Could ya get the door!" Nice calls from the kitchen. I hadn't noticed the doorbell ring, or a knock or whatever, but I guess I wasn't paying attention.

It's Hajime and Koneko at the door. I let them in and they sit on the couch and so since I'm feeling uncharacteristically nervous I sit down to entertain them with some jokes in an attempt to chillax a

bit. Hajime never really lets on whether or not she thinks I'm funny, I mean I guess since I get no reaction maybe that's a nah? but Koneko's way more gracious. Anyway, I don't get very far with my performance because there's another knock at the door (that I notice this time, mind you), so I go and let in Honey, Three, and Art, who I don't remember texting, well, because I don't have his number but I figure Nice must have invited him.

"We picked this guy up on the way," mentions Honey, "and I figured we oughta let him in on the action." She cocks an eyebrow at me in confidence of some hidden meaning in her words (or so I think but maybe I'm just reading into it because I'm vibing?).

I grin at Art, who smiles amicably at me in return. "The more the merrier, right? Nice and I made the best cake so y'all are in for a real trea-"

Nice-kun cuts me off from the kitchen, "Hey Birthday, come here and make some coffee will ya? I'm doing these dishes..."

"Haaa? I'm busy entertaining guests!" I protest, I don't really know why.

"I can do that for you," interjects pretty-boy Art, giving another polite smile. I'm grateful as he whisks away towards the kitchen.

I lead Honey and Three over to the couch and we sort of engage in a conversation about how it seems like just yesterday we were celebrating Nice-kun's birthday and how fun mini-golf was and remember that crazy putt Art made? but in the middle of the conversation there's another knock on the door and I jump to get it because I know who it is already by the sound the hand made on the wood.

"Looks like the birthday boy's here," I announce as I swing the door open and wink at Ratio, who risks a kind of tsundere smile and allows me to clap his shoulder and usher him heartily into the living room. I gleefully transfer my sunglasses to his face as everyone greets him with their well wishes; they look funny overtop of his eye-patch but hey, they're my birthday glasses, and he doesn't even take them off! Art brings in a pot of freshly brewed coffee and sets it on the little table in front of the couch, along with a few mugs for people to serve themselves, and Nice follows him out holding a full shot glass that he places in Ratio's hand. I love birthdays.

A few hours later, after Nice-kun encouraging Ratio to take a few more shots and us all getting hopped up on coffee and the celebration, we break out the cake. Nice-kun scrounges up a candle from somewhere and we all sing happy happy to an only-slightly-shit-faced Ratio as he admires our hard work and he makes his wish and we all dig in after Nice-kun makes a disclaimer about the special ingredient. We're all bros here, after all.

Soon enough, we're all lounging around the living room in little groups, murmurings of conversation gliding in and out of audibility. I'm on the arm of the couch next to where Ratio's sitting, my arm draped around his broad shoulders and his head tilted ever so slightly just so as to brush me with his fluffed up hair, and I'm just gazing about the scene. Nice-kun is sitting on the coffee table, rambling on to Art and Hajime and anyone else who's listening about

something like how coffee is always really great for a high and I'm going along with him for some reason like,

"Yeah, and it just tastes really good too! Like with the cake. Coffee and sweets is the best pairing..." I guess I'm talkative even without thinking about it. "Say, Ratio, what'd you think of the cake anyway?"

"Ah?" Ratio's kinda slow to react right now. "It was actu'ल्ली really good. You two made it huh?"

"Totally!" I answer proudly, "Just me and Nice." I share a look with Nice and can tell we both know the feel.

"Yeeeaah, and Birthday was trying to tell me there was too much vanilla extract! HA! Ahahahahaha!" Nice-kun nearly knocks over three mugs of coffee in a fit of laughter. Really, it's like he's some immensely clumsy and obnoxious person sometimes-

"What's all the racket about?" complains Murasaki, entering the room like he just woke up or something. Oh, that's definitely what happened because, oh my god, shit, his face-

"HahahahaHAHAHAH! AAAHhh! hahaha! Ahaahahaha, oh shit!"

I can't even help myself at this point, and I think my excessive laughter breaks Nice-kun's resolve because I hear him joining me. Everyone's looking now and I feel like either a God or Satan incarnate when the room boons with uneven laughter, I'm not sure which, but Nice-kun takes the cake for Worst Ever when he actually whips out his phone and takes a picture. He then proceeds to make amends by approaching Murasaki and leading him away to probably show him our handiwork and maybe help him wash it off. I'm still fending off puffs of laughter as Ratio reminds me that it's not ok to be such a shitty guy, and I just reach down to grab onto his tie and untuck it from his pocket because I'm always wanting to do that and it feels like a good time to try; he doesn't seem to mind so I just hold onto it because the fabric feels nice in my hand.

"What was that stuff all over his face?" yawns Art, who I'd forgotten was even there because he's faded and when he gets like that, I've noticed, he takes on this dim countenance...

"Uh, marker?" I don't really remember exactly what we used? "It wasn't a sharpie." I'm kind of an idiot, too.

Hajime's stomach growls just to let us all know that she wants a hamburger. A minute later, Nice and Murasaki re-enter the room all fresh-faced, at least Murasaki is. Nice-kun is shit-faced. Like me.

"Nice," says Hajime, touching her stomach, "I'm hungry."

"Oh, cool!" exclaims Nice-kun, as loud as ever, "Let's go hit up McDunnels! A midnight feast!"

"It's not even midnight," informs Murasaki.

Regardless, in five minutes, Nice-kun leads a group of hungry friends, including Murasaki, out into the big bad world,

McDunnels-bound. Three and Honey follow them out because they "have to go" because "it's late." Ratio and I end up being the only two to stay behind because Ratio is too far gone to show himself in public and I couldn't leave the birthday boy alone now could I? I want to be alone with him anyway. Large groups can drain me out _de temps en temp_. The sound of the door latching gives me a warm satisfaction somewhere in my body and I yawn, showing weakness because it's just Ratio and me. I think this prompts him to sigh a bit, and he leans back into the couch, his neck resting against my arm. He's warm. We sit in almost complete silence until our friends return.

And when they do they're loud as hell about it. No surprise there. Nice is recounting some story, and he finishes up as everyone tumbles into the room,

"AND IT TURNS OUT WE HAD IT ALL ALONG! WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?" They're all laughing.

"Welcome home," I assert myself.

"Oh yeah I picked up some grub for you two because, you know, you can't really miss out on McDunnels on your birthday right?" Nice-kun drops a McDunnels bag on the coffee table. At least he doesn't knock over any more coffee.

"Hey this couch pulls out, right?" I'm planning on sleeping over.

Nice-kun and I then have to help get Ratio off the couch so we can do the thing because he's all groggy and stoned and he's heavy as fuck but we manage. Meanwhile, Art and Hajime help us out by moving the coffee table to make room... When it's all set up Murasaki brings in some blankets and pillows and it's perfect. We decide Koneko and Hajime should share the bed; we're chivalrous. Then the remaining five of us kind of pile onto the makeshift cot (Ratio, me, Murasaki, Nice, Art), and we fall asleep pretty quickly.

At least I do, because I begin having weird lucid dreams where we're all moving around and the bed is bigger than it actually is and... I don't remember really. I mostly remember the smell of Ratio's hair and the feeling of being closed in on either side by warmth and breath. It felt very human.

* * *

><p>I identify with Birthday a bit...

Also, at one point I write Nice's dialogue in all caps and that's not, like, because he's screaming or anything. just denoting how he sometimes talks really loudly and quickly and boldly and it can be disconcerting, especially depending on the context of the narrator... but y'all don't need my explanations so B)

Heads up though next chapter is gonna be kinda special! (Hint: not from birthday's pov)

5. Tanker Tattoo

*****Nice is getting a tattoo, from Birthday. Ratio's watching.

It's a thing." - prompter**

so I tried to think of what'd be a good tattoo idea and it was hard so I just resorted to...

forgive me

"NO REALLY! IT WOULD TOTALLY MAKE A COOL TATTOO!"

For some reason, I'm sitting in Cafe Nowhere watching two idiots have this conversation. That was boy-genius Nice (so-called by the other idiot, Birthday) exclaiming so earnestly. He and Birthday have been on this topic for the past twenty minutes now. Birthday took off his sunglasses five minutes ago and they're still going. Nice insists that face of the cartoon mascot Tanker-kun would make a good tattoo ("It's the beach tiger! Like Hamatora! How is that not cool?"), but apparently Birthday isn't convinced ("Na-ah, that's what you would call a point waiting to be missed. Seriously? The meaning you extract from it would be totally lost in the broader implications of the symbol; if you walked around with a goddamn Tanker tattoo people would just think you're an idiot!") Birthday's pretty into the discussion, actually. It's not too often that he lets Nice get him all riled up like this. Well, actually...

"I still think it wouldn't work," he's shaking his head now.

"How can you even SAY that with that mess on your leg? I don't get you at all!" Nice is yelling again and I see Birthday taking in a big breath in preparation for some retort, but I'm at my limit so I cut him off.

"Why the hell are the two of you always so loud? One might as well carry around a pair of goddamn ear plugs." I inadvertently yell at them.

Nice turns to me with one of those faces that lets you know he's about to say something irritating as hell, and he doesn't disappoint. "Why don't you then?" I hate this kid sometimes; he continues, "But, really, what do you think? Shouldn't a tattoo just be meaningful to the one who bears it? Why should I care whether or not my meaning comes across to people I don't even know? Either way I've achieved what I wanted by putting that meaning on my body!"

"I don't care either way, just stop scaring all of Koneko's customers away." I can feel my brows furrowing in further annoyance, and I pinch the bridge of my nose to regain control. "If you're so fired up about it why don't you just get the stupid tattoo already?"

"RAAtiooo, now we're talkin'!" Birthday snatches up his sunglasses and slips them back onto his face in a swift fashion that I recognize as customary and practiced. As he turns back to Nice the upward curl of his lips tells me he's got an idea. "I was just trying to spare you the embarrassment of such a thing, but hey, you've proven your commitment. I dare you to get that tattoo you're talking about."

"Haaa? As if I have the money for that! You've gotta be kidding me." Nice crosses his arms obstinately like some brat (or "like himself" I should say).

"No need for that! I'll give you the tattoo myself!" I can tell Birthday's excited at the prospect of stabbing a needle into Nice's body. I'd be, too, I guess...

"What are you talking about?" Nice's tone is that odd balance between flat and colorful that only he ever manages to strike so as to come off indifferent but all the more engaging.

"How are tattoos made?" Birthday emphatically stands up to reach into his back pocket for his wallet, from which he procures a sewing needle. "A needle and ink."

Next thing I know I'm following Birthday, whose hot on the heels of Nice as he leads us upstairs to his little apartment. After Birthday's proposal Nice sat holding his chin for several long seconds before calling up Art to ask him to pick up a thing of tattoo ink from the Everything Store ("The store with everything!") and meet him at his place (I guess him and Art are pretty buddy-buddy now, huh?). We enter the room and Nice immediately flops onto his little couch and looks up as Birthday goes to stand in front of him.

"Where do you want it and how big?" He has this hideous grin on his face and I have to find a seat at the kitchen table to expel the weird energy it gives me.

"Here, lemme draw it out," Nice is leaning forward to grab a pen and pad of paper from the coffee table and then he puts pen to paper and he has to scribble out and restart whatever he's drawing a few times before finally lifting it from the table and showing it to Birthday.

"Nice," and I see Nice look up as if being addressed just to be ignored by Birthday, who's looking at the image. "And where was that?" he finally says.

"Oh right! Uh..." Nice involuntarily looks down and pats around on his torso. "Uhhh," he removes his vest in consideration. "Maybe my chest?"

Birthday raises an eyebrow, as do I, so I save him the trouble of saying, "Isn't that a bit too conspicuous?"

"I guess you're right... how about my back?"

"That could be better," agrees Birthday.

Nice gets up, actually pulling his shirt off without even removing his headphones (Who does that?), and goes to a nearby mirror. He twists his body around in an attempt to get a good look at himself. I watch how his muscles move beneath his skin and hold the position (I appreciate Nice's body like I would anyone else's, I suppose). Then Birthday walks over and starts putting his hands on his body like "here might look cool, or maybe here?" Funny, I thought he didn't think a Tanker tattoo would look cool at all. They keep on like that until they decide it would look best on the right of Nice's back, on the upper ribcage where it turns into the side of his torso. As if on cue, Art arrives the moment they come to a decision.

"What did you need this for?" Art's composure doesn't even falter

when he finds Nice shirtless.

"I'm getting a tattoo!" Nice grabs the bag from Art's extended hand, ignoring Art's doubtful face, and pulls out the little black bottle of Idnia Ink. "Sweet, ok, Birthday how does this work again?"

"Well I dip this needle in the ink and then stick it in your side a bunch of times-"

"You missed the part where you _sterilize the needle, _as well as the section of skin where the tattoo's gonna go-which is probably the most important part of the whole process," I scold. "Are you sure you're qualified to do this?"

Birthday grins at me. "Well now I know. So sure I am!" I'm mad about it.

He goes to the bathroom and I don't trust him to do it properly so I follow him and direct him to the hydrogen peroxide and remind him to wash his hands, "_with soap_." Then I find some string that I thread through the sterilized needle and wrap around a pencil for grip. I tie it tightly and give the crumby thing to my partner's grabby hands.

We return to find Nice on the couch as Art is talking down to him about some business matter (more specifically, about how he "can't and won't" discuss business matters with him "this time"). He promptly concludes the conversation upon our entrance so I approach Nice straightaway with a cotton ball and the hydrogen peroxide.

"Alright, let's get going then," Birthday instructs from where he comes to stand next to Art, "Get into a good position so we can do this."

Meanwhile I'm guiding Nice onto his side so that he's facing the couch and his arm is up and out of the way and then I'm dabbing him with the peroxide like the doctor I am with one hand and looking up "safe stick and poke" on my smartphone in the other, just to be on the safe side. When I'm done I move out of the way with a, "You sure you can do this?" as I trade positions with Birthday.

He answers me with an, "Of course. Let's see..." He uses the pen to retrace Nice's sketch onto the skin (I notice Art eyeing the sketch with masked but tangible incredulity). He works slowly and meticulously and it's an impressive likeness when he finishes. "Ok Nice, go look at that in the mirror and tell me if it's ok, yeah?"

Nice jumps up to check it out and when he returns with a nod of approval and repositions himself Birthday gets serious. He opens up the bottle and dips the needle in the ink and he's approaching Nice's pure skin when the kid kind of yelps,

"Wait, wait, is this gonna hurt? Should I prepare myself?" His voice is colored with unease.

"Oh, you're right!" Birthday responds like he hadn't even thought about that. With a wink that goes unnoticed by Nice he goes, "Here I'll getcha whatcha need buddy," and setting the tattooing instrument

in the ink bottle at an angle so as to rest unperturbed (I note the manual dexterity he exhibits) he goes into the kitchen to return with a shot glass and a bottle of Whiskey. He aids Nice in knocking back a few shots and tries to get in on the action but I stop him because "drinking impairs your motor skills and you'll be needing those in working order to do this well." I go so hard I don't even go hard, you know? I then share a meaningful look with Art and the two of us help ourselves to some shots, too, because this is all none of our concern; we were just dragged into it. When Nice is sufficiently sedated, and the two responsible adults (Birthday intentionally excluded) are sufficiently loosened up as well, Birthday picks up the needle again.

"Here we go!"

There's an odd (should I say maniacal?) twinkle in his eye as he makes the first perforation. I think the whole room is united in the satisfaction of that first stroke of crystallization... Or maybe we all like hearing Nice gasp in pain? He does that, too, anyway. I don't know. I go lean over the back of the couch to monitor what's going on, and I remove Birthday's glasses for him because he didn't have the sense to take them off himself. I think Art's on the same vibe as me, too, because he's moving in as well, but maybe that's just to get a better view of the action. We're all silent for a while as Birthday slowly but surely solidifies the pen outline into Nice's skin. All of us except Nice, that is, whose groans and curses and breaths and little sub-exclamations intermittently escape his mouth with every amateur prod from Birthday. I start to feel bad for him, especially as he starts to bleed a little bit.

"Is it okay that it's bleeding?" Art beats me to making the criticism.

"Hah? Iss bleeding?" I see that Nice is easily affected by shots. I mean he is just a kid, so it's not like I expect him to hold his liquor...

"It's fine," I assure them, "I read that that's normal."

Art is listening actively and looks satisfied with my authority on the subject (I'm a doctor, after all), but Nice doesn't respect any authority so naturally...

"Man, but it _hurts_! 'Re you _sure_?"

"Stop talking, your chest keeps moving!" snaps Birthday, hitting Nice over the soft brown head in urgency.

"Don't worry, Nice, Ratio's a doctor, remember?"

Despite the amusement I detect in his words, Art's voice acts as a soothing balm of reason to smoothe over Nice's distress, and it works like a charm. Nice settles down and continues enduring the painful process. Soon he's asking Art to pour him another shot and of course Art complies because the poor kid's in pain and who can really resist a request from Nice? At least that seems to be the general consensus... I ask Art to hook me up afterwards as well because I... just need another drink.

"Whaa, thass's far's you _got_?" Nice is on his feet and yelling

again as he assesses the progress of his tattoo. "You've been sticking me for like an _hour_."

"Bullshit! You have no idea how tough it actually is! My hand is aching!" - Birthday indignantly.

"It _hasn't_ been an hour, Nice," I wouldn't call myself drunk but I do get irritable and complainy when I drink... I check my phone. "It's been 47 minutes."

"Well thass a long-ass time for being repeatedly _stabbed_ with a needle," Nice grumbles petulantly.

"Are you going to try to finish it?" Art inquires, always looking for results.

"Maaann, I dunno'f I _can_," Nice ventures, his hand approaching the tender area on his back and I just-

"_Don't touch it!_"-accidentally yell; Birthday's the only one who doesn't jump. "I-it'll get dirty from your hands," I amend inarticulately. Shit.

"Mm, right..." but his hand hovers over the skin for longer than I feel comfortable about.

Then Birthday finds his voice and, naturally, brings the conversation back to himself. "Anyway, _you_ can't keep going? I don't think _I_ can do anymore so you don't have to worry about that, HA!" I thought he hadn't been drinking but maybe it's an association thing...

"Well, if you want to keep going, _I_ could give it a try," Art aims a smile at Nice that is less professional than I remember, and if I didn't know any better I'd say he was flirting. It's a good thing I know better, am I right ladies?

Nice looks at him as if unsure how to respond, but then says, "You wanna try?"

I see his eyes kind of light up, and the I feel something so I turn to Birthday and catch his eyes for a crucial second, then move over to him and mutter towards his ear, "You've been replaced, Birthday."

"All the better; now I can drink, right?"

We look at each other. We see them.

Then I'm pouring Birthday a shot as he seats himself on the coffee table next to the tattooing station. Nice and Art are getting situated on the couch together and I watch Art as he unbuttons his shirt sleeves and flicks the cuffs back, rolling them up to just below his elbows, before getting to work on Tanker. I relate. I'm also sick of standing around so I drag over a chair from the kitchen and sit my ass down. Then I give in to the temptation to undo my own cuffs; I flick them up once and leave it at that. I'm feeling kind of sluggish and as my head tilts a bit to the side I feel Birthday's eyes on me. I lift mine to meet his and we sort of communicate that way. Nice and Art seem pretty wrapped up in the whole tattooing

process so Birthday just leans over and asks,

"Wanna go to the roof? It's hella stuffy in here." He pulls at the collar of his t-shirt to illustrate his point. Then I see he's put his sunglasses back on, so guess he means business.

On the roof Birthday mentions that he "happens to" have a joint and that means he brought me up here to smoke it, so I sit down with my back against the railing and he parks himself next to me and we light up together like we have so many times before. I guess Birthday's feeling generous tonight because I get it first. The taste of the herb relaxes me and I just let him take it from my hand to get his hit. Sometimes I play power games, but I swear that wasn't one of them. Anyway, the air is fresh out here and I watch the mild breeze carry away our puffs of smoke. I feel Birthday secure an arm around my shoulders and I lean into it because there's nothing wrong with that. I consider the fact that by retreating up here we're giving Nice some alone time with Art, which I'm pretty sure he hardly minds. The joint passes between us a couple times until it's a bit more than halfway done and I put it out. Birthday says I can keep it, and I think he's being too docile for some reason.

"Are you tired?" I look him in his goddamn glasses.

He yawns, taking them off (oh), "Not really."

I go to avert my eyes but then I feel Birthday's hand on my face and it makes me look at him again, and he's leaning into me with a penetrating expression on his face... I bring myself to meet his eyes and then my mind is so focused on our connection that I find I can't really blink or, or hear anything, but then our foreheads are touching and then I...

â€¦wake up, damn I'm tired. What happened last night? It was a late night at the office or something right? Yeah... I remember something about Nice getting a tattoo but that must've been a dream, huh?

At Cafe Nowhere, I see Nice sitting at his usual spot next to Hajime. He has his back to me, but I'm distracted from my thoughts when I hear Birthday burst in with a "HEY, Nice-kun, _how's it_?" and then he walks up and claps him on the back, on the right upper ribcage, where it turns into his side, and I see Nice _jump- _

"_Shit_, Birthday, Tanker is still sore!" he gasps, rounding on a grinning Birthday with earnest eyes.

Oh. Well, it looks like they're at it again...

****that's... what happens****

****disclaimer: don't try the tattoo thing at home lol!****

End
file.